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## EGOISM, LOVE, AND POLITICAL OFFICE IN PLATO

PLATO is portrayed by many as an ethical egoist: he believes that one should perform an act only if it is in one's interest.<sup>1</sup> The *Republic* is thought to reveal this ethical egoism. Asked to show that one should be just, Plato responds by arguing that justice is to one's advantage.<sup>2</sup> He does not seem to consider the possibility that one might have an excellent reason to be just simply because justice is in someone else's interest.

Yet this interpretation of the *Republic* as an egoistic defense of justice does not sit squarely with everything we find in the dialogue. For example, justice requires the philosophers in the ideal polis to govern even though this benefits the state and not themselves (519D-521B).<sup>3</sup> In addition, the abolition of private property among rulers and soldiers is defended on the grounds that whether it benefits these classes or not, it does benefit the polis (415E-421C). We can try to show that these passages only seem to conflict with Plato's egoism, or we can say that although Plato is an ethical egoist, he occasionally contradicts himself. I will argue, however, that neither approach is correct. Plato, in my view, is not an ethical egoist.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Richard Brandt, *Ethical Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1959), p. 369; David Gauthier (ed.), *Morality and Rational Self-Interest* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), pp. 1-2; and H. A. Prichard, *Duty and Interest* (Oxford, 1928), *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> I take Plato to mean not only that one must have a just soul to be happy, but also that one must *act* justly (refrain from murder, theft, rape, and other forms of *pleonexia*) to be happy. Just acts, however, are not sufficient for a good life.

I use these expressions interchangeably: justice pays; justice profits one; justice is to one's advantage; justice is in one's interest. Plato himself uses a number of different expressions interchangeably: justice *lysitelei* (445A1: pays, profits one); justice should be praised from the point of view of its *ophelian* (589C2: advantage); justice *oninesin* a man (367D3: benefits); the just man is *eudaimonesteros* than the unjust man (*passim*: happier).

<sup>3</sup> H. A. Prichard, in *Moral Obligation* (Oxford, 1949), p. 108, says that Plato contradicts his own thesis in this passage. So too Arthur Adkins in *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 290-291, and Allan Bloom in *The Republic of Plato* (New York, 1968), pp. 407-408.

## I

Most of this paper will concern the philosopher's obligation to rule, so let me state Plato's view on that matter (539D-540C) in more detail. The philosopher-in-training studies dialectic from ages thirty to thirty-five and then, for fifteen years, fills minor political and military offices appropriate to the young. At fifty, he undertakes studies which culminate in his seeing the Form of the Good, and spends most of his time thereafter in philosophical contemplation and discussion. But he is not allowed to spend all his time in this way. He must take his turn in ruling the polis, and looks upon this task as a necessity rather than a fine thing.

This seems to conflict with Book II's promise to show that just action is necessary for having a good life, for how is the philosopher better off if he performs the just act of ruling the polis? The problem is raised in the *Republic* by Glaucon, who says of the philosophers, "Do we treat them unjustly, and make them live worse, when it is possible for them to live better?" (519D). Plato's answer (519E-520E) begins with a reminder that the aim of the ideal state's laws is not to have some one class live especially well, but to harmonize the citizens, making them benefit each other in whatever way is possible. Furthermore, he says, the requirement is just. Philosophers growing up in imperfect Greek states have developed against the will of the polis, and it is just that these men, obligated to no one for their education, should be unwilling to pay for it. The philosophers of the ideal polis, on the other hand, have been brought up to rule and have been given a better and more complete education than anyone else. Being just men, they can be expected to share in the responsibilities of ruling.

This reply to Glaucon does not ease our perplexity, for although it argues that the requirement in question is just, it ignores the other part of Glaucon's worry: do we make them live worse by requiring them to rule? Is Plato abandoning the program announced in Book II? Or have we misinterpreted that program?

Some believe that a passage in Book I indicates that the phi-

osopher *will* have a self-regarding motive for ruling.<sup>4</sup> Socrates proposes the view there (347B-D) that a good man will be reluctant to govern and will do so only under threat of penalty. "And if one is not oneself willing to rule, the greatest penalty is to be ruled by a worse man" (347C3-5). Perhaps ruling will be in the philosopher's interest after all. He will realize that if he does not rule he will be governed by an incompetent ruler, and this is more to his disadvantage than spending a little of his time managing the state.

If the ideal polis contained only one man capable of ruling well, then our problem would be solved. But Plato always thinks in terms of a *class* of capable rulers.<sup>5</sup> So the failure of one philosopher to carry out his assignment would not lead to his being governed by incompetent rulers unless Plato assumed that each political job is so important that if any is left undone the philosophical state will be destroyed. There is no evidence that he made this assumption, and at any rate loopholes would remain. Suppose, for example, that a philosopher knows that he will die in two days and that it will take three days for his political irresponsibility to undermine the polis. What reason does he have not to quit? Furthermore, we should remember that there will always be more philosophers in the ideal polis than there are those actively engaged in ruling. Otherwise, Plato could not promise that most of the mature philosopher's time will be spent doing philosophy (540B). Since philosophers outnumber political positions, why shouldn't the philosopher try to avoid receiving a political assignment in the first place? If he succeeds, this will not lead to his being ruled by worse men. There will simply be one less philosopher to share the burden of ruling. And we cannot appeal to the difficulty he might have in deceiving his colleagues or the punishment he might incur if caught. The *Republic* cannot argue that justice pays on *these* grounds.

The question of why the philosopher should rule is twofold. First, why should he carry out a political assignment once it has

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., R. C. Cross and W. D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic* (London, 1964), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> At 445D5-6 he says that his utopia can be called a kingship if one person in the *class of rulers* is exceptional.

been made? The answer some see in Book I is not very convincing. Second, why shouldn't the philosopher try to avoid receiving a political assignment? To this Book I gives no answer at all. And I can think of no other passage that provides a self-regarding reason for ruling. We have here a genuine example of a just act for which no egoistic justification can be found. The remaining problem is whether or not this conflicts with the program of the *Republic*.

## II

I will now argue that when Plato says that something pays he sometimes means by this not that it is to one's own advantage but that it is to the advantage of someone else. If this can be shown, then it will be possible to abandon the view that for Plato there is a self-regarding reason for every just act.

We first need some technical terms.

Consider a man who loves his child. His feeling for it may be such that he regards it as an extension of himself, so that anything that benefits the child *ipso facto* benefits him. And if anything happens that is to the disadvantage of the child, then it is also to the man's disadvantage, whether he knows about the event or not. Such a person, when he considers his interest, takes into account the things that profit the child, not because whatever profits it *ultimately* affects him, but because the child's profiting is his profiting. He is to be contrasted with a man who believes that *as a matter of fact* whatever harms his child also harms himself. Furthermore, the person who loves his child does not regard his own interest as necessarily having priority over the child's. He does not abide by the rule that whenever their interests conflict, his is to take precedence. Let us say that when such a person considers the child's interest, he is consulting his own *extended* interest, whereas when he consults his own, and not the child's, interest, he considers his *proper* interest. When deliberating, he takes into account both his proper and his extended interests, gives each consideration its appropriate weight, and then acts in his own interest, all things considered. Such an act may be contrary to his proper interest or contrary to his extended interest,

depending on the circumstances. But he never acts contrary to his interest, all things considered—that is, considering both proper and extended interests in his deliberation.

As I will argue in the next section, this is a portrait of the typical citizen of the ideal polis. The thesis I will defend now is that where *we* would say that an act is not in someone else's interest, Plato sometimes says instead that it is not in the agent's own interest, and he means by this that it is not in his extended interest. The conflict between what he says and what we would say is therefore only verbal. This is what is happening in the following passage from the *Republic*:

"Is it possible," I said, "on the basis of this argument, that it be profitable for anyone to take gold unjustly if something like this happens: he takes the gold and at the same time enslaves the best part of himself to the most depraved? Or, if he took gold for enslaving his son or daughter, and to savage and bad men, it wouldn't have profited him no matter how much he took for it; now if he enslaves the most divine part of himself to the most godless and polluted part and has no pity, won't he then be wretched and accept golden gifts for a destruction more terrible by far than Eriphyle's accepting the necklace for her husband's soul?" [589D5-590A2, Bloom].

Reason is no less precious than one's child, and just as it never pays to enslave a son or daughter, so it never pays to perform an unjust act, since this enslaves reason to spirit or appetite. But why does Plato expect us to agree that the enslavement of one's children never pays, no matter how much money one receives for them? I think he is assuming that parents love their children in a certain way: they consider any injury to their offspring as their own injury, and the enslavement of their children is therefore contrary to their *extended* interest. To see this, consider the alternative interpretation: Plato means that it is contrary to one's *proper* interest to sell one's children into slavery. For example, they are fun to be with, do a certain amount of work, and so forth. The trouble with this reading is that if Plato were appealing to such advantages as these, he would hardly expect us to agree that it never pays to sell one's children regardless of their price. Surely they do not contribute so much to one's proper advantage that no sum of money can make good their loss.

If we assume, however, that there is a loving relationship between parent and child, so that whatever hurts the child *ipso facto* hurts the parent, then we can see why Plato thought his claim plausible. For the hardships of slavery are then included in the parent's deliberation, and no sum of money will compensate for them. That Plato is thinking in terms of extended interest here is confirmed by the fact that he selects an example in which the slaveholders are "savage and bad." Were the parent concerned solely with his proper interest, the savageness of the buyers would play no part in determining whether or not the act profits him. Their cruelty is mentioned because it makes the transaction contrary to the parent's extended interest.

We can conclude that in this passage Plato says that something does not pay and means by this that it is to the disadvantage of someone else. Instead of affirming (as we would) that parents are willing to sacrifice their interest for the sake of their children, he keeps to the language of self-interest and says that it does not pay to sell them. His meaning is not that it is contrary to one's proper interest to enslave them, but rather that it is contrary to one's extended interest and one's interest all things considered.

### III

A writer who can say that something does not profit one and mean by this that it is contrary to someone else's interest could easily be misconstrued as an egoist. I suggest that this is what has happened to Plato. When he says in Book II that justice pays, this is compatible with the possibility that although certain kinds of just acts are always in one's proper interest, certain others are not in one's proper interest but are rather in one's extended interest. Murder, theft, rape—these and other acts are considered unjust in a wide variety of states, and Plato thinks they are always contrary to one's proper interest.<sup>6</sup> But in the

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<sup>6</sup> I give an account of Plato's argument for this position in "Reason and Justice in Plato's *Republic*," in E. Lee, A. Mourelatos, and R. Rorty (eds.), *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos* (forthcoming).

ideal polis certain other acts will also be considered unjust; for example, the philosopher will be justly required to rule. Even though this may conflict with his proper interest, the requirement does not violate the claim made in Book II that justice pays. For that claim is not taken by Plato to mean that *all* just acts are in one's proper interest.

On this interpretation, Plato recognized and approved of the fact that people act not only out of self-interest, but also out of love for others. His approval of the latter motive is indicated by the degree to which he exploits it in his construction of the ideal polis. Whereas in many states the people look upon their rulers as masters, in the ideal polis they regard them as "saviors and helpers" (463A-B). The ideal rulers in turn do not, like other rulers, see the people as slaves (463B5), but as wage-givers, providers, and friends (463B3, 547C2, 590D5-6). The allegory of the metals is designed to remind the citizens that the land of the polis is their mother, and that they are all brothers (414D-E). The guardians will feel a special kinship among themselves due to the abolition of property and the family, and will regard every fellow guardian as a member of his family, not an outsider (463C4). Plato compares the relation between the citizenry and one of its members to the relation between a person and one of his physical parts. When a finger hurts, the person, not just the finger, is in pain. Similarly:

When one of the citizens suffers anything, whether good or bad, such a polis will most of all say that the part that suffers is its own, and the entirety will share in the pleasure or share in the pain [462D8-E1]. So in this polis, more than any other, they (the citizens) will say together, when some one person fares well or ill, the phrase we just now mentioned: that what is mine is faring well, or that what is mine is faring ill [463E3-5].

What is it for the entirety to share in the pleasure of one individual? What does it come to when one says that what is mine is faring well? The idea, I suggest, is that each citizen will consider himself to be profiting simply because a fellow citizen is profiting.

These friendly relations between the citizens could not exist

unless they are capable of sacrificing their proper interest for the sake of others. For example, when bronze parents give birth to talented golden children, the rulers have to take the children away and give them a special training (415B, 423C-D). This would no doubt be considered just, but how can the parents reconcile themselves to this sacrifice? Plato's answer must be that although it is contrary to their proper interest, it is in their extended interest and in their interest all things considered, since the maximum development of talent benefits both their children and the entire citizenry.

Though all citizens regard each other as friends and brothers, no one loves the polis more than the philosopher who has, at fifty, reached the final stage of his education and sees the Form of the Good. He is allowed to become a ruler not only because he has the intellectual ability to see the Forms, but also because he has, at various stages in his life, passed certain tests devised to determine the degree to which he loves the polis (413E-414A, 539E-540A). At one point, Plato describes the philosopher's attitude toward the state in the following way:

And wouldn't he surely love something most when he believed that the same things are advantageous to it and to himself, and when he supposed that if it did well, he too himself would do well along with it, and if it didn't neither would he [412D4-7, Bloom]?

There are two ways of taking this. On one reading, which I reject, Plato is saying that to be a good guardian one must believe that whatever promotes the welfare of the polis as a matter of fact contributes to one's proper interest. I consider this to be an implausible interpretation because a ruler of this sort would have an unstable allegiance to the polis. If ever he decided that there is something that promotes his proper interest but not the interest of the state, his loyalty to the state would be imperiled. A more plausible interpretation of the above passage is this: a person loves something most of all when he believes that anything that benefits that thing *ipso facto* benefits him. In other words, the philosopher conceives of his interest as including more than his proper interest; it is always in his extended interest for the state to fare well. If this is the sort of attitude Plato is

looking for, it would be wise for him to devise tests in which the candidate is tempted by philosophical pleasures to compromise the interest of the state. Assuming that the tests are successful in weeding out egoistic candidates, Plato is entitled to a high degree of confidence that the philosopher will not fail to do his assigned job of governing.

The conclusion to be drawn from these passages is that Plato does not think of the citizens of the ideal state as egoists. In their deliberations they consult more than their proper interest and they are willing to sacrifice their proper interest for the sake of others. Now, if Book II's promise to show that justice pays is taken as a reflection of the author's ethical egoism, the dialogue as a whole becomes incoherent. But as I said earlier, we do not have to read Book II in that way. There is nothing odd about the fact that his citizens often consider their extended interest if Plato thought that justice need not always be in one's proper interest. And this interpretation allows us to understand why Plato responds as he does to Glaucon's question. He takes Glaucon to mean: "Isn't it contrary to the philosopher's proper interest to rule the state?" His reply is that in constructing the ideal polis he is not aiming at the well-being of any particular group. This response puzzled us only because we wrongly assumed that for Plato it is in a person's proper interest to obey every just requirement. Once this assumption is dropped, we can see that his response to Glaucon is appropriate.

#### IV

I take it that there is a strong case for denying that Plato is an ethical egoist. But one bothersome difficulty remains. We realize now that once a philosopher has been given a political office to fill, he has reason to do his job. But it might be asked: why should he not try to avoid receiving such an assignment in the first place? Since there are more philosophers at any time than political offices, the polis will not be harmed if one philosopher somehow manages to avoid receiving a political appointment. The only people the irresponsible philosopher might be

said to harm are his colleagues, who now must take more time away from philosophy than they would ordinarily have to. He may feel their increased burden as his own, but why should he not reason that the harm involved is outweighed by the advantage of his contemplating the Forms? Is Plato simply assuming that it is not outweighed? I think not. The philosopher, on his view, not only wants the citizens of the polis to be virtuous, he also wants to help *create* virtue in those he loves. And if he receives no political assignment, this desire to create must remain unsatisfied. To explain this theory, we must turn to the *Symposium*.

In his interchange with Agathon, Socrates claims that a person who loves something, such as health or riches, wants to have that thing in the future. But how far into the future? The question is answered by Diotima: "Love is for the good to be one's own forever" (206A11-12). In other words, if a person loves something (such as wealth), he believes it is a good thing for him to have, and he wants to have it indefinitely into the future. But how can mortals satisfy this desire? Her answer is: "Mortal nature seeks, as much as it is able, to be always and to be immortal. And it is able to do this only by generation, since generation always leaves behind a new thing to replace the old" (207D1-3). This desire to create takes one of two forms: a desire to have children or a desire to beget intelligence (*phronesis*) and the other virtues (209A3-4). The best sort of homosexual lover, for example, tries, by means of speech, to create virtue in his beloved, while the best sort of statesman tries, by means of law, to create virtue in the citizens (209A-E). Similarly with the philosopher who has seen the Form of Beauty. "Begetting and nurturing true virtue, he can become a friend to god, and if immortality belongs to any man, it belongs to him" (212A5-7).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Plato does not explicitly say in this passage that the philosopher who has seen the Form of Beauty creates virtue *in another*. But it is reasonable to understand him in this way, since at an earlier stage in his ascent to that Form the philosophical lover creates "such words . . . as will make the youths better" (210C1-3). Since his love is expressed by creating virtue in others to begin with, why should it change, once he sees the Form of Beauty, so that he then creates virtue only in himself? Furthermore, Plato explicitly says in the *Phaedrus* (276E4-277A4) that the philosopher is "as happy as a man can be" because he creates virtue in others.

The most perplexing part of this theory is its claim that the desire to possess eternally what one believes is good (for example, virtue) gives rise to the desire to create something (for example, virtue in another). The theory would be quite odd if it were telling us that giving someone else a moral education is somehow a means to the end of forever being virtuous. For mortals cannot be virtuous forever, and there are no means to an end that cannot be achieved. But I do not think that Plato is claiming that creating virtue is a *means* to possessing eternal virtue. A desire to do *x* can provide a reason for doing *y* without *y* being a means to *x*. If *x* cannot be done and if *y* is sufficiently like *x*, then *y* may be regarded as a substitute for *x*, a second best. For example, if I want to paint something red and red is unavailable, I may decide to paint it orange instead. We regard this as normal and intelligible even though painting something orange is not a means to painting it red. In the same way, the love of one person, if it cannot be expressed, may give rise to the love of another person who is regarded as akin to the first.

The relationship between being virtuous forever and creating virtue should be interpreted in the same way. Since we are mortal, we cannot be virtuous eternally, and making others virtuous is no means to this. Our desire to be virtuous forever, however, since it cannot be satisfied, gives rise to a desire for some second best, some goal which we regard as similar to the original goal. If I cannot be virtuous at every future time, then at least I can be causally responsible for someone being virtuous at every future time.<sup>8</sup> That is, I can create virtue in someone who will survive me and who will in turn create virtue in someone who survives him. If each member of this chain inculcates virtue in another who survives him, then there will always be some bit of virtue in the world for which I am a cause, and this is a state of affairs similar to the state of my being virtuous eternally.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> If creating virtue in others were a *means* to possessing the good eternally, Plato's theory in the *Symposium* would be an egoistic one: he would be saying that love motivates us to benefit others because in doing so we benefit ourselves.

<sup>9</sup> Plato also says that the desire to possess the good eternally can lead to a desire to be remembered (208C-E, 209D-E). For example, Achilles avenged Patroclus only because he thought he would be eternally famous for his virtuous

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato explicitly connects attaining immortality and having a permanent effect when he says that the dialectician who morally educates youths engenders words which “are not fruitless but have a seed from which other words spring up in other characters. They are forever able to grant it immortality” (276E-277A). And in the *Symposium* we get an indication of how Plato would defend the claim that the desire to be virtuous in the future is similar to the desire to create virtue in others. An individual is continually changing, not only in his physical characteristics, but also in the “habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains and fears” of his soul (207D-E). The desires I have in five years will be different from my present desires, even if their objects are the same.<sup>10</sup> So to care about my future self is already to care about things other than the habits, beliefs, and desires I now have, for these habits, beliefs, and desires will not exist far into the future. There is therefore not as great a difference as one might have thought between creating virtue in my future self and creating virtue in someone whom I love and who will survive me. In both cases, I am making sure that when my present virtuous desires and beliefs no longer exist they will be replaced by others that are also virtuous.<sup>11</sup>

This theory may strike us as odd even on Plato’s terms, for why should a person whose soul is immortal fear that his possession of the good will be terminated by death? Had Plato not yet arrived at his doctrine of the immortality of the soul when he wrote the *Symposium*? On the contrary, I think he viewed that dialogue as compatible with the immortality of the

act (208D-E). I take this to mean that his desire to be virtuous forever gave rise not to a desire to create virtue in another but rather to a desire to create an unending fame for having acted virtuously. In other words, always being remembered for one’s virtue is another substitute for actually being virtuous forever. In this case, the substitute desire is self-regarding, whereas when one creates virtue in another, the substitute desire is other-regarding.

<sup>10</sup> That Plato has this in mind, and not necessarily a change in what is wanted or believed, is indicated by 208A: remembering is a case of acquiring something new even though the object known at earlier and later times is the same.

<sup>11</sup> The idea is similar to one found in Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, (7th ed.; New York, 1966), p. 418, and developed by Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford, 1970).

soul. The *Phaedrus*, after all, connects attaining immortality with creating virtue in others (276E-277A) in spite of its argument that the soul by its very nature is immortal (245C-246A). Most likely, Plato's view is that the philosopher's desire to have such virtues as justice and temperance forever could be satisfied only if his soul were always to have parts. For these virtues, as they are conceived in the *Republic*, can only be attributed to a soul with parts. Since only the rational part of the soul is immortal, there is no eternal tripartite soul,<sup>12</sup> and there is nothing that can be just and temperate forever. The philosopher realizes that the immortality of a part of himself will not help him eternally possess what he loves.

The picture that emerges of the philosopher-ruler's motives is as follows. His primary interest is in an activity he undertakes for his own sake: contemplating the Forms. He has, however, a secondary interest in an activity he undertakes for the sake of others: creating virtue in the polis. His love for the Forms, and especially the Form of the Good, is much greater than his love for the polis and its citizens, for the beauty of the Forms far surpasses that of the ideal state. This explains why Plato says that the philosopher does not regard ruling the polis as "a fine thing" (540B4). He does not mean that the philosopher positively dislikes ruling, that he has no desire whatever to do so. Rather, the idea is that educating the citizens is not a fine thing when compared with the most magnificent of human activities, studying the Forms. Nor should we be misled by Plato's statement that the philosophers are compelled to rule (520A8) and regard ruling as a necessity (540B5). For he also says that the founders of the ideal polis will compel the best citizens to undertake the study of the Good (519C8-10). Compulsion here amounts to direction by others, not action against one's will. The philosopher may be so dazzled by his vision of the Good that, left to himself, he would not give his secondary interest the attention it deserves. The fact that his love of the Forms exceeds his love of the polis

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<sup>12</sup> See *Republic* 611A-612A and *Timaeus* 41C-D, 69C-E. The fact that the discarnate soul has parts according to the *Phaedrus* is admittedly troublesome. For a way out, see W. K. C. Guthrie, "Plato's Views on the Nature of the Soul," in Gregory Vlastos (ed.), *Plato* (Garden City, N. Y., 1971; Vol. II).

does not mean that he best satisfies his desires by completely ignoring the less preferred activity. The rational plan is to satisfy both desires, spending most of his time contemplating the Forms, and the rest of his time, thanks to the prodding of colleagues, creating virtue in the state. The philosopher is never forced to act contrary to his will—which is different, of course, from saying (falsely) that he always acts in his proper interest.<sup>13</sup>

## V

Clearly, Plato's moral and psychological theories are more complex than they appear at first. He does not believe that every just act is in the agent's proper interest and he does not believe that one should perform an act only if it is in one's proper interest. He recognizes the positive interest we take in benefiting others and our capacity to consider the welfare of others as though it were our own—when those others are individuals for whom we feel love or affection. Why then does he try to provide an egoistic basis for a good deal of ordinary morality? Evidently, he sees that certain ways of treating others are inappropriate even when we have no fellow-feeling for them, and since such behavior is not motivated by love of others, he reasons that it must be based on self-love.

Plato's theory has been misunderstood because he sometimes uses the concept of self-interest in a broader way than we do. He would have expressed himself less confusingly had he said that some just acts are in our own interest and some are not. Had he talked in this more straightforward way, he might have spotted a mistake in one of his doctrines: the claim that every unjust act subverts the rule of reason in one's soul by unduly strengthening spirit or appetite (588E-589A). Plato should have recognized exceptions to this. For example, the philosopher who refuses to rule and who contemplates the Forms instead is not

<sup>13</sup> Here I am drawing on the doctrine of Joseph Butler that acting out of self-interest is to be distinguished from acting out of a desire one has. See *Fifteen Sermons Preached at Rolls Chapel* (London, 1726), esp. Sermon XI.

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strengthening his spirit or his appetite. By claiming that injustice always nourishes these parts of the soul, Plato encouraged the misinterpretation which I have been trying to correct.<sup>14</sup>

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